DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 586 FL 017 495

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TITLE Entry-Exit Criteria Issues as They Pertain to the Bilingual Education Programs of the Micronesian Region.
INSTITUTION Guam Univ., Mangilao. Coll. of Education.
PUB DATE Sep 85
NOTE 18p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Admission Criteria; *Bilingual Education Programs; Comparative Education; Elementary Secondary Education; English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; *Graduation Requirements; Language Maintenance; *Language Skills; Limited English Speaking; Program Design; *Student Placement
IDENTIFIERS *Micronesia; United States

ABSTRACT

Bilingual education program exit and entry criteria are discussed and applied as they exist in the Micronesian region, in which limited-English-speakers are in the majority. The discussion begins with a review of the rationale and assumptions of similar programs in the continental United States. The concerns of those programs are: native language role and distribution, the need for language skills assessment upon entry, periodic assessment for outplacement, and the feasibility of assessment programs and adequate recordkeeping. The two distinct linguistic contexts of the Micronesian region, dual-language and single-language prevalent, are then described and their implications for entry and exit assessment are examined. The classic entry-exit criteria concerns can not be applied in the Micronesian context because of the pressing need to make bilingual education programs available to all students and because of the desirability of preserving and developing the region's indigenous languages and culture. (MSE)

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FL017495

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Robert A. Underwood and Anthony F. Tawerilmang reviewed this article for accuracy and conceptual validity. Their thoughtful assistance improved the presentation, especially Robert Underwood's suggested additions.

ENTRY-EXIT CRITERIA ISSUES AS THEY PERTAIN TO THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS OF THE MICRONESIAN REGION

Background

The operation of bilingual education programs throughout the continental United States, under the auspices of federal and state laws, is naturally accompanied by student eligibility and placement concerns. The concerns arise from several perspectives. From the educational equity perspective, it is important that students who need first language support in order to have access to an understandable education be identified and served. From federal program requirements flows the need to document that at least 60% of the students included in a federally supported program are limited in their English proficiencies. From the perspective of local school realities, bilingual education services are a scarce commodity, requiring allocation to those students with the greatest need. Resistence to increased bilingual education services, for whatever reason (e.g., financial, staff training and skill, philosophical opposition), seems to promote the idea that only some students may have access to bilingual education, and that their access must be limited. Thus, according to this rationale, some process must be designed which not only identifies those in need of service, but which also determines when bilingual education opportunities will be withdrawn from them. This rationale is accompanied by a concern about educational speed that encourages "exiting" or withdrawal of bilingual education services as quickly as possible.

In the early legislative forms of the bilingual education act, the entry-exit criteria focused primarily on English speaking and listening proficiencies. Implicit in this was the assumption that educational success depended on students being able to understand what their English speaking teachers say to them, and being able to respond in English. Thus, the identification and placement process was designed around the classification of

students as non-English speaking (NES), limited English speaking (LES), and fluent English speaking (FES). Soon, the inadequacy of this assumption was widely recognized, and a new classification system was built into the federal legislation as well as into some state legislation. This new system made direct reference to literacy skills, so English proficiency then referred to a student's ability to speak, listen, read, and write proficiently in English. The nomenclature of the classification system changed to accommodate this expanded legislative view of essential proficiencies. Instead of speaking of NES/LES/FES students, the new categories were limited English proficient (LEP), and fluent English proficient (FEP), with the term proficient symbolizing the addition of reading and writing proficiencies.

Processes for designing specific exit criteria and procedures began at the state levels, generally following the inclusion of literacy functions. These criteria included mechanisms for determining when students had developed sufficient English speaking and listening skills, usually vis a vis performance on an oral English proficiency test such as the Language Assessment Scales or the Bilingual Syntax Measure; and also for sufficient English reading skills vis a vis one of the several standardized English achievement tests such as the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, or the Stanford Achievement Test. To date, very few programs systematically assess English writing skill.

Not all states in the continental U.S. have systematic entry-exit assessment and recordkeeping systems. However, several have developed extensive and well organized systems which fit their particular linguistic environments well. The systems established by the California State Department of Education is one such example (DeAvila, Duncan, and Cervantes, 1978), and the system designed for the Hawaii State Department of Education is another (Hawaii State Department of Education, 1980).

In order to understand the issue of entry-exit criteria for the bilingual education programs in the context of the Micronesian Region, let us make a list

of the major assumptions of the entry-exit criteria rationale in force in continental U.S. educational settings:

Rationale and Assumptions

1. Among the students entering school, there will be a mixture of primary languages; however, most students will have English as their primary language, and a minority of students will have non-English languages as their primary languages.

2. All students who enter school should have their levels of English language proficiency determined in order that those who are LEP will then be given the kind of linguistic instructional support they need to have access to an understandable education in all content areas, and to develop their English skills. The assumptions embodied in this rationale are:

   a. If they are not identified, the LEP students will not be served;
   b. If they are identified, the LEP students will be served.

3. Without an entry assessment process, bilingual education services might illigitimately be made available to ineligible students. Assessment results will allow ineligibles to be weeded out from the admission list.

4. Without a formal testing process, those students who are LEP cannot be accurately estimated or identified.

5. The only language of real interest is English. If the non-English language of the student is of interest, it

is a minor and dispensable concern. The purpose of the program is to teach English. Funds and resources will therefore not be allocated for the parallel assessment of the primary language proficiencies.

This assumption is not universally held because many bilingual education educators place a high value on the maintenance model which continues development of the first language skills for their own sake, as well as to strengthen emerging second language English skills. However, this approach is being discouraged by current political forces on the continental United States.

6. Students in bilingual education programs must be reassessed at the end of certain program periods so those who have achieved FEP status may be quickly and accurately weeded out of the program since their new FEP status makes them eligible for placemennt in all-English classrooms. The assumption implicit in this is that it is either harmful for students to remain in bilingual education programs after they have reached a FEP level on tests; or, it is programmatically undesirable due to financial, staffing, enrollment, or other limitations.

7. The bilingual education student population is a numerical fraction of the general population, and it is distinctly and measurably different from the majority. Since they represent a numerical fraction, they represent a small enough number to make an assessment program feasible.

8. There are sufficient public funds and trained human resources to implement a complex assessment, follow-up, and LEA/SEA-wide recordkeeping system.

The Micronesian Context

In the Micronesian Region, there are at least two categorically different linguistic environments, each of whichare drastically different from that of the continental United States. As a result, the entire issue of entry-exit criteria and procedures described above does not fit comfortably into place in Micronesia. To understand this, let us look first at the two major types of linguistic environments. The reader should keep in mind that rapid changes are underway throughout the Region. Linguistic environments could change within a single generation.

1. The dual language environment. The dual language environment is currently most prevalent in the Territory of Guam, although rapid changes in the Commmonwealth of the Northern Marianas are quickly bringing its islands' linguistic environments to this status as well. The language of the indigenous Chamorro culture of Guam is Chamorro. Most Chamorro adults are able to understand the Chamorro language, and probably the majority are also able to converse in this language. Conversational Chamorro, though less prevalent in public domains than English, is a high frequency linguistic input - particularly in the home domain of Chamorro families - to anyone living in Guam. It is the author's contention that most Chamorro children in Guam currently are the recipients of dual language input: two continuous streams of language, one in English which is probably higher in frequency and status in the public domain, and another in Chamorro which is probably higher in frequency in the home domain of the family and cultural community. Test results suggest that most Chamorro children in Guam understand Chamorro but cannot speak it with more than minimal fluency (Spencer and Palomo, 1985); and that they both speak and understand English although their spoken and

literate English is often at a level somewhat less than total proficiency. These results are compatible with the observation that Chamorro families are speaking less to their children in Chamorro, and requiring reciprocal Chamorro language interaction less often. Most parent groups and educators would agree that Chamorro parents are most concerned that their children become highly proficient in English (Underwood, 1982). In the experience of the author, many parents also mistakenly fear that Chamorro language proficiency will have a subtractive effect on their children's development of English proficiency. Nevertheless, the legal and public perspective on Chamorro language preservation and development is strong and official. In Guam, there exists a legislative mandate that the Chamorro language be taught to all children in the Guam public schools. In addition, a publicly funded Chamorro Language Commission conducts ongoing activities which expand public awareness of linguistic issues, provide public instruction in certain language skills, and which expand and refine the Chamorro dictionary. The implications of these factors for bilingual education models are important. In Guam, the bilingual education models are best described as either restorative or maintenance, with objectives for full development in both Chamorro and English language proficiencies being clearly drawn.

In the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, two languages indigenous to the Micronesian Region are prominant: the Chamorro language of the Chamorro people of CNMI, and the Carolinian language of the CNMI population that long ago migrated to the Marianas islands from western Micronesian islands as traders and refugees from typhoons and storms at sea. The well being of these languages is currently much sounder than is the Chamorro language in Guam,

particularly in the outer islands of Tinian and Rota. A large proportion of the Carolinian population speak both Chamorro and Carolinian. Still, the English language is ever present, especially in Saipan, and is spoken almost universally as a second or third language by members of the Chamorro and Carolinian populations. In Rota and Tinian, it might be argued that Chamorro still creates the prevalant language environment, with the prominance of English gradually increasing. The implications of this for bilingual education models is that the maintenance model prevails in the CNMI at the present time. The restoration model may become necessary in CNMI's future if the two indigenous languages do not receive consistent support at this time.

In addition to English and the indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian Micronesian languages, there are a number of Asian immigrant languages present in both Guam and CNMI. These include large numbers of Tagalog and other Filipino language speakers, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. To date, there has been no activity toward developing bilingual education programs for these student populations, although this is a distinct possibility in the future. The current approach to them in Guam is to provide ESL and compensatory education services. It is this population more than any other in Micronesia that represent an appropriate group for entry-exit concerns.

2. The L1 Prevalent Environment. All other portions of the Micronesian Region may be characterized as having language environments in which the most prevalant language by far is that of the indigenous culture. This portion of the Micronesian Region has been administered by the United States as the Pacific Trust Territory since the United Nations

awarded the trusteeship to the U.S. at the close of World War II. Now, three distinct political entities have evolved: the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Kosrae, Truk, Pohnpei, Yap), and the Republic of Belau. Although the development of English language proficiencies is a major objective of the educational systems in these islands, the indigenous language are used exclusively or predominantly in the early elementary grades, with English instruction introduced in the second or third grade and gradually increased until it is the dominant language of instruction at the secondary levels. The indigenous languages are the currency of normal communicative interactions in the homes, communities, churches, and most public domains. The exception to this is that English is typically the formal language of government and international commerce. Since all of these languages are oral in tradition, their written forms are still developing. The new constitutions, and an expanding array of educational, health, and government materials are encoded in the new written forms of these languages. Due to the relative short supply of written materials in the indigenous languages, most citizens have greater exposure to English reading and writing activities and materials. Nevertheless, to function fully in these communities, one would need to develop at least a survival proficiency in the speaking and listening skills of the indigenous language of each.

The implications of this type of language environment for bilingual education are that maintenance and English as a foreign language instruction models predominate.

In these Micronesian areas there is also a presence of Asian as well as other Micronesian and Polynesian immigrant

languages. Given the struggle to develop educational systems for their principal clients, the children of their own cultures, it is not likely that resources will be available for the development of locally funded bilingual education programs for immigrant language groups.

Sizing Up Entry-Exit Assumptions for Micronesia

1. Among the students entering school, there will, in some LEAs, be a mixture of primary languages; however, most students will have a Micronesian language as their primary language. For most of these, the Micronesian language will be the language of the indigenous culture of that particular LEA. A minority of students will have an Asian immigrant language as their primary language. All but a small minority of students will be limited or non-English proficient - LEP or NEP. Thus, ESL instruction will need to be offered to virtually all students if the English proficiency objectives are to be achieved. The maintenance bilingual education model will primarily entail the use of the indigenous language of that island culture as a medium for teaching the literacy skills and the content area curriculums, and later as a foundation for skill transfer for English reading and writing. In virtually every Micronesian Region LEA, the issue of primary language bilingual education for students whose first language differs from that of the indigenous culture of the LEA is unresolved. The slender educational finance and human resources of these LEAs make it unlikely that these immigrant languages will become target languages in bilingual education programs.

3. Since all education at the elementary level throughout

the Micronesian Region uses both the indigenous first language and English as mediums of instruction, as well as content areas, there is no concern over the eligibility of students for bilingual education instruction. Eligibility is a moot question, thus making entry criteria meaningless.

Since LEPness is ubiquitous, it is reasonable to ask just what the factors are that LEAs use in their selection of program schools for their federally supported Title VII grants. These choices turn on factors other than student characteristics. For example, in several LEAs (e.g., Pohnpei and Yap), the cultures of their outer islands have different languages. The pattern of program development has been that the earliest programs developed materials in the languages used in the largest island or central area of the LEA. Subsequently, program schools in the outer islands were selected so materials in those languages could be developed and field tested as well. Another factor in the choice revolves around the schools where needs for staff development are great, or where there is a willingness to participate in an innovative program. Also significant, however, is the pragmatic motivation to obtain continued funding in the face of a federal policy which requires that new grants be given only to "previously unserved" populations (i.e., new grades, language groups, or program schools). This is a blind and unfortunate policy in the Micronesian Region where the need for capacity building support is of a qualitatively different nature and a quantitatively greater magnitude than are program needs anywhere in the continental United States. In reality, multiple programs are needed in most LEAs. The need is particularly urgent in view of the fact that the end of the U.S. trustee relationship is imminent and these LEAs will probably lose their eligibility

for federal funds at that time or shortly thereafter.

4. The uncertainty of students' LEP status is a concern primarily in Guam and the CNMI, the two dual language environments. A number of indices such as annual criterion referenced and standardized tests suggest that while proficiency in all English language skills is generally high, many of the students of these islands have not attained levels of full English proficiency, particularly in the literacy skills. But this condition applies to virtually all students in the Guam and CNMI schools except for the Anglo-American minority. Thus, English proficiency instruction on an LEA-wide level is indicated, and Chamorro instruction is mandated by local legislation. There is much to recommend pre-post L1 and L2 assessments for all of the bilingual education interventions. However, an assessment program of the California or Hawaii types for all entering students in the LEAs or SEAs would not change the observable realities. It would merely quantify the obvious and absorb funds which are much needed for functions lying closer to the classroom. The same analysis is even more true of the L1 prevalent environments in the remaining LEAs of the Micronesian Region. Although baseline English proficiency measures are badly needed for instruction, program planning and program evaluation purposes, the primary language speaking and listening skills of students in these LEAs are strong and obvious. Not so obvious are their primary language reading and writing skills, for which individual and group measures are needed for both instructional and planning purposes. The differential clarity of estimates of the students' primary language skills in speaking and listening versus reading and writing is reasonable if one recalls that the written

forms of the Micronesian region are still in a state of invention and that the extent to which even teachers can read and write their primary languages is not a matter of certainty. This differential would also be expected from the fact that literacy skills are typically taught in schools rather than in the teachings of homes and communities; thus making literacy skill development dependent upon the extent of direct literacy instruction in school.

5. Throughout elementary education in Micronesia, both English and the primary language are target languages. Typically, in the L1 prevalant language environments, the primary language is the sole language of the school in the first and perhaps the second grade. Then, English language instruction is introduced and gradually increased with increasing grade levels. There is now emerging a trend to reintroduce the primary language as a course of instruction at the secondary level. Several LEAs (e.g., the Marshall Islands and Pohnpei) are introducing tests of primary language reading skill into their highschool admission examinations. English is not the only language of real interest to the educational programs of Micronesia. In all LEAs in the Region, the LEAs are mandated to restore and/or preserve and develop the indigenous languages. Also, in most LEAs, effort and resources are being expended to develop testing instruments in the indigenous languages and to conduct at least small scale focused assessments of reading with them.

6. Exiting considerations in Micronesia are as much without merit as are entry criteria. Since bilingual education is universally applied, there is no reason to exit students, and no alternative programs for them to exit to if they

are identified as FEP. Based on local legislative requirements to maintain the primary languages, and the equally strong public sentiments to develop Micronesian students as balanced bilinguals with both indigenous and English proficiencies, continuous enrollment in bilingual education programs is considered not only beneficial, but essential.

7. In contrast to the NEP and LEP linguistic minorities of the continental United States context, where English is the native language of most students, it is the NEP and the LEP students of the Micronesian Region who are in the majority. These numbers are large, making population-based assessment procedures as questionable in Micronesia as they would be in the continental United States if those to be assessed were in the majority instead of the minority.

   As is true of other applications of the entry-exit concept, conceptualizing such criteria depends on numbers. If a minority is participating in a program, it is easy to conceptualize criteria. If everyone is to be in the program, the entry aspects of the concept fall away entirely. What is left is a concern for standards of meritorious participation (e.g., grades, attendance, retention versus drop-out), and exit (evidence of mastery or proficiency, grade promotion, diplomas).

8. Perhaps one of the least often recognized factors in the entry-exit criteria discussion at it applies to Micronesia is the pragmatic question of public funds and trained human resourses to implement the complex assessment system entailed in entry-exit procedures. Public education in the Micronesian Region is scarcely 30 years old.

> Without local tax bases, U.S. federal funds have been the major source of educational revenue. With school buildings in short supply, and in need of repair and upgrading everywhere; with the majority of teachers holding less than a four year college degree; with critical textbook and supply shortages in most islands; with scores of outer islands that can be serviced with technical assistance and supplies during the few hours a field trip ship stops every 3-8 weeks; with many communities which are still distant or inaccessible to any school facility; with large proportions of students being denied junior and senior high school educations because of the lack of buildings, teachers, and supplies; and with only a handful of individuals beginning to develop testing and program evaluation skills --- it is difficult for any knowing educator to recommend a classic entry-exit program in Micronesia as a feasible undertaking, educational appropriateness questions aside.

In a general sense, the incompatibility of the entry-exit criteria concerns to the Micronesian context stem from the broad-based support for universal bilingual education, and from the pervasive need for capacity building in all parts of the Region. The gate-keeping and access concerns of the continental United States are supplanted in Micronesia by pressing needs to make education from grades 1 to 12 available to all students who want it, and to preserve and develop the indigenous languages and cultures of the Region.

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